

An abstract, colorful drawing of a person with their arms raised in a 'V' shape, set against a background of stars and swirling patterns. The drawing is done in a sketchy, expressive style with various colors like yellow, pink, and blue.

COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

**Identifying Barriers to College Student Transfer:
Key Findings from the 2004 Community and Technical
College Student Survey
and Focus Group Results**

Identifying Barriers to College Student Transfer: Key Findings from the 2004 Community and Technical College Student Survey and Focus Group Results

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document summarizes key findings from focus groups and survey data collected in 2004 by the Council on Postsecondary Education to identify barriers to college student transfer in Kentucky.

Focus group data were collected from two sources including a statewide meeting of financial aid, admissions, and registration directors; and four regional transfer meetings (Elizabethtown, Hazard, Maysville, and Madisonville) attended by transfer advisors, faculty and administrators.

Survey data was collected through the Community and Technical College Student Survey. 4,985 community and technical college students completed the survey, which asked about their educational goals, perceptions of barriers to degree attainment, and plans for transfer.

From this data collection effort, four key barriers to transfer were identified.

- 1** Financial barriers limit students' access to postsecondary education and transfer;
- 2** Students' perception of the benefit of higher education is overshadowed by their desire for employment and stability;
- 3** The delivery of academic services at the baccalaureate level can be a barrier to student transfer and degree attainment; and
- 4** Academic planning, preparation, and knowledge about transfer can limit students' understanding and success within the transfer process.

In addition to providing information about the barriers related to college student transfer within the state, these findings identify policy and/or program initiatives that address these barriers to college student transfer.

Identifying Barriers to College Student Transfer: Key Findings from the 2004 Community and Technical College Student Survey and Focus Group Results

BARRIER 1: Financial barriers limit students' access to postsecondary education and transfer.

According to the survey data and focus groups, the cost of college is often a barrier in students' pursuit of postsecondary education. Approximately 55 percent of all students who responded to the survey indicated that financial difficulties were a moderate (27.9 percent) or major (27.2 percent) problem that made going to college difficult. Nearly fifty percent of all students who responded to the survey indicated that the cost of books and materials were a moderate (24.8 percent) or major (25.9 percent) problem that made going to college difficult; and 47.2 percent of all students who responded to the survey indicated that the cost of tuition is a moderate or major problem (22.5 percent and 24.7 percent respectively) that makes going to college difficult.

Survey and focus group data also indicate that financial aid structures inhibit student mobility across postsecondary institutions (e.g., KEES monies), that part-

is limited, and that little attention is focused on transfer students in the development and distribution of scholarships. Approximately fifty-three percent of respondents to the survey indicated the majority of their college expenses are paid for by financial aid and loans. Only 13.3 percent indicated their parents paid for the majority of their college expenses. Forty-two percent of the 1,094 students who are undecided about transferring indicated that they would be more likely to transfer if scholarships were available for transfer students, while 11.7 percent of the 1,570 students not planning to transfer indicated cost as a factor in their decision. Students perceive the cost of college to be more than the benefit of a four-year degree, especially in regional areas where there are limited job opportunities requiring a four-year degree.

BARRIER 1: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Create new or modify current state financial aid programs targeting transfer.
- Expand institutional aid for transfer students.

Students indicating financial difficulties are a major/moderate problem that makes going to college difficult

Gender:
58.3% of female respondents
49.7% of male respondents

Ethnicity:
58% of all minority respondents (includes black, non-Hispanic; Hispanic, American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian or Pacific Islander; and Other)

Age:
42.8% of respondents under 19 years of age
54% of respondents age 20-21
63.4% of respondents age 22-24
67.2% of respondents age 25-29
65.3% of respondents age 30-39
57.2% of respondents age 40 and over

BARRIER 2: Students' perception of the benefit of higher education is overshadowed by their desire for employment and stability.

Focus group and survey findings suggest that several issues related to students' need for employment and stability act as barriers to college student transfer. Specifically, focus group data indicates a baccalaureate degree is often not needed for securing a job in one's hometown, and economic growth is seen in technical fields rather than occupations requiring 4-year degrees. According to survey data, students taking courses in the fields of manufacturing (50 percent), retail and service industry (43.9 percent), health professions (37 percent) and computer/Information technologies (33.8 percent) had

time and transfer student-specific financial aid

higher percentages of responses indicating they were not planning to transfer than those taking courses in other fields. While 47.9 percent of students indicated they were taking college courses to upgrade their skills for career advancement, only 7 percent of students indicated they were taking college courses because their employer requires it; and 19.3 percent of the students not planning to transfer indicated that they are not transferring because their job does not require that they have a baccalaureate degree.

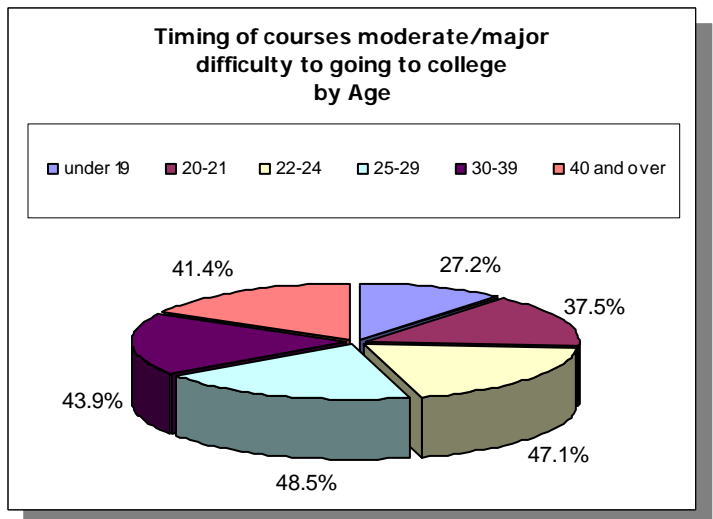
Focus group results also indicate that college is an optional activity when compared to the need for employment. Students want to enter the workforce and the idea of getting another degree may seem too distant. According to survey data, 54.6 percent of the 1,570 students not planning to transfer indicated that they never planned to transfer—it was not their goal; and 14.4 percent of the students not planning to transfer indicated that they do not believe a baccalaureate degree is important at this time.

Another finding of the survey data and focus groups is that community/family culture may not promote education. Students whose parents did not earn a bachelor's degree (N=3,611) were less likely to have plans to transfer. Specifically, 34.3 percent of these students were not planning to transfer and 23.1 percent were undecided. Age was expressed as a factor often limiting the student's mobility after the community or technical college. Students age 19 and younger were more likely to be planning to transfer, with 54.6 percent indicating they were planning to transfer immediately or in

the near future. Older students were less likely to have plans to transfer (37.6 percent of students 30 to 39 and 28.7 percent of students over 40) (N=587).

BARRIER 3: The delivery of academic services at the baccalaureate level can be a barrier to student transfer and degree attainment.

Focus group and survey data show course delivery options are a barrier to college student transfer. According to focus group results, course offerings (i.e., time, location, and format) do not always accommodate the nontraditional or working student. 37.8 percent of survey respondents indicated that



the times courses are scheduled were a moderate or major problem which made attending college more difficult for them. Almost one-third (32.8 percent) of the 1,094 students who are undecided about transferring indicated they would be more likely to transfer if coursework and degree programs were available online. Although online course offerings are suitable to many students, both survey data and focus groups suggest some students are not comfortable with online learning and are more traditional classroom learners. The focus group findings reveal that degree programs offered by the universities on community and technical college campuses are often limited to

BARRIER 2: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Expand current programs that promote career pathways for KCTCS that more clearly tie transfer/baccalaureate degree attainment to valued employment outcomes.
- Include a stronger transfer component in the new phase of the Go Higher Kentucky college access campaign to increase student motivation to transfer and provide information on tools available to support transfer.
- Develop policies that encourage communities to invest in the promotion of transfer.

education and technology, thereby limiting the students' options.

BARRIER 3: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Develop policies/programs that encourage universities to expand baccalaureate offerings in targeted areas on KCTCS or extended campuses.
- Create policies/programs that encourage greater use of KYVU and KYVL, and other distance learning formats to increase access to baccalaureate degree programs for place-bound students.

BARRIER 4: Students' academic planning, preparation, and knowledge about transfer can limit their success within the transfer process.

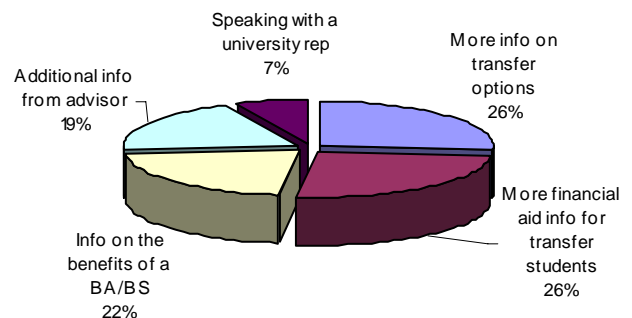
According to the data from focus groups and the survey, students do not always have a career plan in mind and subsequently do not plan for transfer. These students face difficulties when attempting to transfer coursework that does not fit a baccalaureate program or transfer agreement.

Another issue raised by both survey data and focus groups is student advising. According to focus group results, students need more focused advising at the 2-year institution—the current advising model (part-time faculty, large case loads) does not work. Students are not aware of the transfer process. The transition from the two- to four-

year institution is not always an easy or well-supported process. These students face additional barriers (e.g., fear, relocation) that need to be addressed at both the sending and receiving institutions.

According to the survey, 63.6 percent of the 2,320 students planning to transfer (soon or in the near future) felt they had enough information to be able to transfer to a university, whereas 36.4 percent felt they did not have enough information. 1,094 students indicated they were undecided about transferring to a university. When asked about the information that would help them determine whether or not to transfer, their responses included more information about

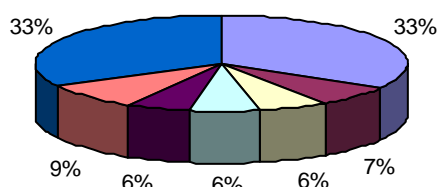
Information that would help undecided students determine whether to transfer (students could indicate multiple responses)



financial aid, benefits of a baccalaureate degree, additional advice from their advisor, and speaking with a university representative. Focus group data also indicated that students who are required to take developmental education courses face initial barriers that make the idea of taking additional years of college coursework to complete the bachelor's degree seem distant and unattainable.

Sources of information for students planning to transfer

- College counselor/advisor
- University Website
- High school counselor/advisor
- College admissions/ registration office
- Parent
- Other sources
- Did not receive transfer info



BARRIER 4: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Reduce the need for remediation at KCTCS campuses.
- Include a stronger transfer component in the new phase of the Go Higher Kentucky college access campaign to increase student motivation to transfer.
- Complete statewide implementation of the Course Applicability System (CAS) to provide students' with online access to academic planning information.